Intro to Imagineering: How to Think Like a Disney Imagineer

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Contact Information

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Course Description

"It's kind of fun to do the impossible." – Walter Elias Disney

On December 16, 1952, Walter Elias Disney formed Walt Disney, Inc. which would eventually establish Walt Disney Imagineering (WDI), the research and development arm of the company. WDI was initially created to design and develop Disneyland, but the company has done far more than Disney ever imagined. Intuitively, Imagineering is a portmanteau of imagination and engineering. Imagineers have a broad range of skills and talents, from architects to writers, artists to engineers, and everything in between. However, you don't have to work for WDI to think like an Imagineer. What separates Imagineering from engineering is that it brings art and science together to make something truly unique and innovative. ***How do we make the impossible possible?*** We will use the principles of Imagineering and revisit this question frequently throughout the semester. You do not need any background in engineering to take this course.

In this course, we will delve into the history and design process of Imagineering to fully understand what it means to be an Imagineer. Students will learn "Mickey's Ten Commandments" for theme park design used throughout the theme park entertainment industry, observe previous and present projects created by WDI, and establish an understanding of how to think like an Imagineer. Students will also be challenged to apply the Imagineering thinking and design process from Blue Sky to "construction" in a semester-long project.

Course Objectives and Learning Goals

1. Examine Imagineering theory, from imagination and creativity to uniqueness and storytelling, and apply these concepts to academic and personal projects
2. Develop and build upon your creativity and imagination to solve problems
3. Rediscover and appreciate your curiosity
4. Use Imagineering principles of design and thinking to brainstorm, design, and develop a "reimagined" space on campus through a semester long project

Required Texts and Materials

Your Imagination, Curiosity, and Sense of Adventure.

Reading and video assignments will be uploaded to canvas by the instructor.

We will read excerpts from the following books:

Imagineers, The. *The Imagineering Way: Ideas to Ignite Your Creativity*. Disney Ed., 2003.
Malmberg, Melody. *Walt Disney Imagineering: a behind the Dreams Look at Making MORE Magic Real*. Disney Editions, 2010.
Pelt, Peggy Van. *The Imagineering Workout: Exercises to Shape Your Creative Muscles*. Disney Editions, 2005.
Wright, Alex. *The Imagineering Field Guide to Disneyland: an Imagineer's-Eye Tour*. Disney Editions, 2008.
Wright, Alex. *The Imagineering Field Guide to Disney's Animal Kingdom at Walt Disney World: an Imagineer's-Eye Tour*. Disney Enterprises, 2007.
Wright, Alex. *The Imagineering Field Guide to Disney's Hollywood Studios at Walt Disney World: an Imagineer's-Eye Tour*. Disney Editions, 2010.
Wright, Alex. *The Imagineering Field Guide to Epcot at Walt Disney World: an Imagineer's -Eye Tour*. Disney Editions, 2010.
Wright, Alex. *The Imagineering Field Guide to the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World: an Imagineer's-Eye Tour*. Disney, 2010.

There will also be readings from the following articles:

Bemis, Bethanee. “How Disney Came to Define What Constitutes the American Experience.” *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 3 Jan. 2017, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-disney-came-define-what-constitutes-american-experience-180961632/.

Miranda, Carolina. “From Donald Duck to Donald Trump, an Unprecedented Look at Latin American Art Holds up a Mirror to the U.S.” *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 6 Sept. 2017, www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-ca-cam-pacific-standard-time-la-la-debuts-20170906-htmlstory.html.

And the following videos:

“D23 Expo Imagineering Panel: Leave 'Em Laughing.” *Youtube*, DIS, 14 Aug. 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KIN4sIbzvs.

“The Power of Believing That You Can Improve.” Performance by Carol Dweck, *TED Talk*, Nov. 2014, www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve/discussion#t-605617.

Assessments and Project

There will be weekly quizzes in the form of Imagineering exercises to train your imagination and creativity skills. They will start on the second week of classes. They will be graded based on completion (60% per quiz) and the quality and effort put into each quiz (40%). These quizzes will account for 15% of your grade. A grading rubric will be given to you, outlining the goals and expectations of each quiz, as they will be slightly different from the previous quiz based on what we’ve gone over in class the previous week. Some of your participation grade may come from your participation in these quizzes.

For this class, you will be given a project to work on throughout the semester. This project will require you to use the skills and techniques taught in class revolving around creativity, curiosity, and imagination. You will choose one area on campus to “reimagine.” The space can be as small as a dorm room or as big as the campus itself. The goal of this project is for you to stretch the limits of what you know, apply your knowledge from academia or personal experiences, and test your ability to not just think outside of the box, but to throw the box away. Most importantly, you will tell a story through your design, whatever that may be is up to you. Depending on class size, this will most likely be a group project so that students can combine their talents, a strategy used in Imagineering. A more detailed project description including the requirements, guidelines, expectations, and grading rubric will be given out during the first week of class. *

Parts of the project will be due throughout the semester and your Final will be a complete presentation of the project.

This project will account for 60% of your grade (this includes the Final presentation and the smaller parts due throughout the semester).

Week 3: Group decisions made, 5%

Week 4: Submit proposed spaces from each team member, 5%

Week 6: Chosen space for project, 5%

Week 7: Brainstormed ideas, 5%

Week 8: Brainstormed ideas (more developed), 5%

Week 10: Final Decision on reimagined solution, 5%

Week 12: Progress on solution, 5%

Week 15: Completed solution due, 5%

Final Date TBD: Presentation, 20%

*Understanding that these concepts are difficult to measure in terms of grading, grading will be based on completion and a rationale for each decision must be submitted so that I can see which principles of Imagineering you are using for the project. I will also grade on project quality. This does not mean artistic quality as that is subjective, but the quality in terms of creativity, effort, and neatness. This will be outlined in the rubric.

Grade Policies

Quizzes: 15%

Project: 60%

Participation: 15%

Attendance: 10%

This class is graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. You must complete every assignment to receive a satisfactory score in this class.

Grading, on a letter scale, is as follows:

A 85-100	A- 75-84	B+ 65-74	B 55-64	B-45-54	C+ 35-44

C 30-34	C- 25-29	D+ 20-24	D 15-19	D- 10-14	F 0-9

Absence Policies

You cannot miss more than 2 classes in order to pass this class. If you have any special circumstances, please contact me at least a day before class.

Expectations

I expect every student to try their best in this class. Every student should come prepared to learn with their "out of class prep" work done. Every student in this class will pass if they work hard and aren't afraid to use their imagination and explore the depths of their curiosity.

Rice Honor Code

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/. This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

Disability Support Services

If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Support Services (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

Course Schedule

Tuesday, August 21

Topic: Syllabus Week Introduction, "It All Started with a Mouse"

Question: What do you know about Imagineering?

Out of Class Prep Work: None

In class: Syllabus and Expectations, Ice breaker, Group activity "What you know/What You Want to Know", and if time permits, a small lecture on the history of Walt Disney and Imagineering

Feedback: Last 5 minutes of class, everyone writes down what they hope to gain from this course

Tuesday, August 28

Topic: Imagineering: Who, what, why, when, HOW?

Question: How do Imagineers make their dreams a reality?

Out of Class Prep: Read article "How Disney Came to Define What Constitutes the American Experience" uploaded onto canvas.

In class activities: Short Lecture over Imagineering history, Imagineering activity that involves a very basic form of the project, I will show a picture of an area on campus on the board and hand out papers of the same image, separate into groups and determine how they would reimagine the space, the same way that Disney and his colleagues did when they first dreamt and built their first theme park Disneyland. What would you change? What would you add? Take away? Is your "solution" telling the story that you want it to tell? What is the new purpose of the space, or did it change at all?

Feedback: Class discussion of each groups' proposed "reimagined" spaces, what went well? Do they feel imaginative? Creative? Did they make something new? Something that challenges the space itself? How is this related to Imagineering?

At the end, write a small paragraph about what they've learned/what they gained from this activity.

Tuesday, September 4

Topic: Locations and Spaces and Climate, Oh My!

Question: Why is space important?

Out of Class Prep: Book excerpt

DUE: Group decisions made, 5%

Tuesday, September 11

Topic: Imagineering Theory

Question: In what ways can we apply Imagineering theory to work outside of this class?

Out of Class Prep: Book excerpt

DUE: Submit proposed spaces from each team member, 5%

Tuesday, September 18

Topic: Notable Imagineers and Their Practices

Question: What can we learn from Imagineering Legends?

Out of Class Prep Work: Email me the name of an Imagineer that you found online that you find particularly interesting

Tuesday, September 25

Topic: Blue Sky and Other Techniques

Question: How can we apply these techniques to other areas of our life?

Out of Class Prep: Book excerpt

DUE: Chosen space for project, 5%

Tuesday, October 2

Topic: The Importance of A Story

Question: What makes a story captivating?

Out of Class Prep Work: Come to class with a story of your own, read the book excerpt uploaded to canvas

DUE: Brainstormed ideas, 5%

In Class Activity: Everyone shares their story, it doesn't have to be the story you use for your project! It can be true, somewhat true, or something completely from your imagination.

Feedback: Everyone writes on a sheet of paper which story (other than their own) they felt was the most captivating, turn it in before class ends

Tuesday, October 9 - NO CLASS

Tuesday, October 16

Topic: Storyboarding

Question: How can we create a successful story?

Out of Class Prep: Book Excerpt

DUE: Brainstormed ideas (more developed), 5%

Tuesday, October 23

Topic: Keeping the Door of Possibility Open

Question: What can we do to expand our options when our resources are limited?

Out of Class Prep: Do the exercise on slammed door experiences posted on Canvas, read the book excerpt uploaded to canvas.

Tuesday, October 30

Topic: Unblocking the Creative Block

Question: How can we overcome obstacles that obstruct the creative thought process?

Out of Class Prep: Book excerpt

DUE: Final Decision on reimagined solution, 5%

Tuesday, November 6

Topic: Humor

Question: How does humor contribute to the development of an Imagineering project?

Out of Class Prep: Bring your favorite joke to class, watch the D23 video posted on canvas

Tuesday, November 13

Topic: Entertaining Education: Designing an Interactive World

Question: How can we educate and entertain people at the same time?

Out of Class Prep: Read the article "From Donald Duck to Donald Trump, an unprecedented look at Latin American art holds up a mirror to the U.S." It will be uploaded onto canvas.

DUE: Progress on solution, 5%

Tuesday, November 20

Topic: Adopting and Adapting the Imagineering Way

Question: Many people lose their imagination and curiosity as they grow up; how can we make sure we never lose these essential qualities of life?

Out of Class Prep: Think about yourself when you were younger and remember what you wanted to be when you grew up. Illustrate this to the class in any manner you see fit, whether that is a picture, a story, a poem, an interpretive dance or whatever else you can think of, Read the Book excerpt uploaded to canvas to assist in your "illustration."

Class Activities: Everyone explains their out of class prep work, lecture on keeping curiosity and imagination alive throughout adulthood

Feedback: What do you want to be when you grow up now? Everyone answers this question before they leave.

Tuesday, November 27

Topic: Finishing Isn't the Goal

Question: Is there always room for improvement?

Out of Class Prep: Watch Carol Dweck's TED talk, link in canvas.

Due: Completed solution, 5%

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